

Enduring, then Surviving WWII

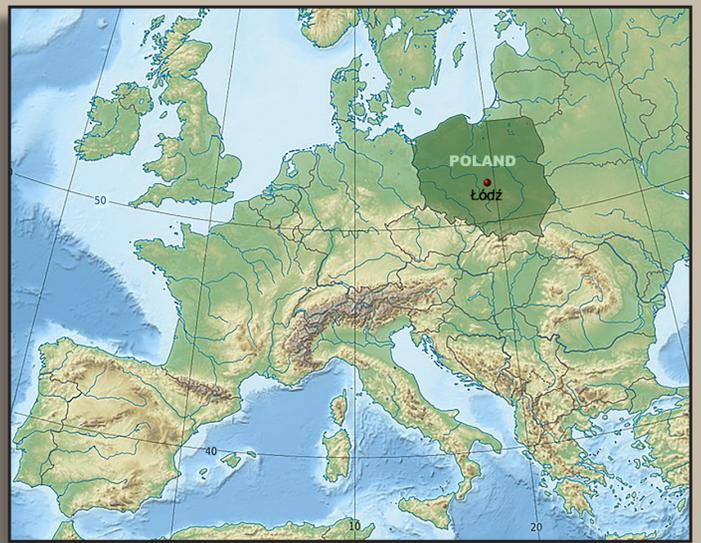
April 16, 1929--Abraham Sztern (Stern) is born in Łódź, Poland with twin Helena, the youngest of 6 children.

Winter, 1930--Twin Helena dies at 9 months of age from a tragic accident by the domestic help, who drops her on her head.

1940--Abe experiences acts of antisemitism from local Polish boys, and the Łódź ghetto is formed.

Computerized sketch of Ghetto Litzmannstadt (Łódź ghetto), Oststraße street, Bundesarchiv, Bild 137-051639A / CC-BY-SA 3.0. Image provided to Wikimedia Commons by the German Federal Archive,

European relief map showing the location of the city of Łódź, Poland. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Winter, 1941--Abe and his family are forced into the Łódź ghetto. Although the family is allowed to stay together, everyone is required to work for food. They are ultimately put in a shared space with many other families. The crowded conditions allow easy transmission of disease and sickness.

Łódź ghetto, 1940-1944. Map courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.



August, 1944--After housing over 68,000 Jews, the Łódź ghetto is liquidated with most of the inmates sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and Chelmno extermination camps. The Stern family is loaded in a cattle car to Auschwitz-Birkenau where they are then separated. Abe's mother is sent directly to the gas chambers, his father is sent to Dachau. His 3 older sisters are sent to a camp in Czechoslovakia. Abe and brother Lazar are taken to a rubber factory, Continental Gummi-Werke AG, which makes tires for automobiles in Stocken-Hannover, Germany, a subcamp of Neuengamme concentration camp.

January, 1945--Abe and Lazar are transferred to a rock (asphalt) quarry in Ahlem, Germany, another satellite camp of Neuengamme concentration camp.

April, 1945--As the Americans are closing in to the rock quarry, men are forced on a "death" march to Bergen-Belsen. Abe and several others, too weak and sick to march, hide in the asphalt quarry. Almost 90% of all the marching prisoners die on the march. Abe finds out that his brother was shot and killed for trying to share food with a fellow prisoner.

U.S. Army 84th Infantry Division shoulder sleeve patch with an axe splitting a rail. Courtesy of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection.



Marburg, Germany in 1946 where Abe worked with some of his fellow survivors at an American Army kitchen. Abe is in the white shirt with an arm around his shoulders. Jack Tramiel is in front, the smaller of the two boys. Mickey Milberger is fourth (shortest boy) in the back row. They would all become lifelong friends.

April 10, 1945--Forced by starvation to come out of the quarry, Abe and the remaining men slowly emerge from their hiding place. They are greeted by the Americans who have liberated the camp. There are only about 30 prisoners alive when the 84th Infantry Division liberates the camp. Abe is taken to a hospital for care, weighing only 75 pounds.

Summer, 1945--Abe stays in Germany, trying to get stronger and healthy after his ordeals in the camps. He begins working in a kitchen for the American Army Hospital in Marburg, Germany. He is able to locate his 3 sisters, all living in Poland, and brings them back with him to Germany. Abe is able to feed his remaining family by "borrowing" food from the kitchen, quietly approved by the army.

Abe and his three sisters are living in Marburg, Germany. Sitting are Rachel, Abe, Ruthie, with Sala standing behind Abe. Their clothes are partially made out of parachutes.

